News release

Hurricane Rita update 09:50

22 September 2005

Weather models from the main forecasting centres around the world are giving authorities a better idea of where Hurricane Rita will make landfall in the next few days. Agencies and departments, including the Met Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, are working closely together to give the best advice for anyone affected by the approaching category 5 hurricane.

Hurricane Rita is well into the Gulf of Mexico and has increased to a category 5, with sustained wind speeds in excess 155 m.p.h. An area of the Texan coastline between Galveston and Corpus Christi seems most likely receive a direct hit from Rita. Residents of this area are being warned accordingly. Extreme winds and flooding from storm surge and heavy rain are the main threats to life and property.

Hurricane Rita 21 September 2005

The 2005 tropical storm season for the Atlantic was predicted to be one of the most active, but this year could see a record number of storms. In early August, with the season already under way, Colorado State University issued a forecast for 20 tropical storms, 10 of which would reach hurricane level. With Hurricane Rita moving across the Gulf of Mexico, there have been 17 tropical storms to date — Rita is the 9th hurricane.

Twenty-one storms were recorded in 1933 and the record number of hurricanes in one season was 12 in 1969. With the official end of the season at the end of November, and the fact that some storms have occurred as late as early December, it seems likely that these records could be toppled this year. With only 21 names nominated for each storm season it also means that the National Hurricane Center in Miami will need to resort to using letters of the Greek alphabet should the record be broken.

Latest tropical cyclone advisories

Travel advice from Foreign and Commonwealth Office

More about tropical cyclones

Notes:
Hurricane strength is defined on the Saffir-Simpson scale noted below:
Category 1 sustained wind speeds of 74 to 95 m.p.h.
Category 2 sustained wind speeds of 96 to 110 m.p.h.
Category 3 sustained wind speeds of 111 to 130 m.p.h.
Category 4 sustained wind speeds of 131 to 155 m.p.h.
Category 5 sustained wind speeds greater than 155 m.p.h.

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

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